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TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: JUSTICE DELAYED, NOT JUSTICE DENIED? FAMOUS THAI
DEVELOPER CONVICTED IN 1992 HIT PLOT VS SUPREME COURT JUDGE

REF: BANGKOK 2481 (THAI COURT FLEXES MUSCLE)

Sensitive But Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

11. (SBU) Thailand's Criminal Court convicted Rangsan Torsuwan, one of Thailand's most famous architects and influential developers, on charges related to attempted murder on September 29, and sentenced him to 25 years' imprisonment. Three other defendants also received lengthy sentences, ranging from 16 to 25 years. The ruling marked an end to a nearly 16-year long investigation, stemming from an assassination attempt on the then-President of the Supreme Court Praman Sunsue in October 1992. At the time, the affair was memorable for its cast of high-society figures in the judicial and business sectors; Rangsan was married to a judge in the Appeals Court. Despite the conviction for attempted murder, Rangsan and two of the defendants were released on bail; their lawyers intend to appeal the verdict with the Criminal Division of the Supreme Court's Appeals Court within 30 days. The verdict marks another example of a justice system that appears increasingly willing to convict members of Thailand's elite, including formerly untouchable, high-society figures.

Convicted...but will he serve time?

12. (SBU) Paul Green, a legal specialist with the International Commission of Jurists, and lawyer Somchai Homla-or questioned whether Rangsan would ever serve time, due to a long-standing culture of impunity for high-profile figures. "Let's wait to applaud the courts until these individuals actually serve time," Green told us October 2. Green cited the recent convictions of Thaksin's wife Potjaman (fled to the UK), former Deputy Interior Minister Vatana (fled to Cambodia), and former prime minister Samak (in Thailand, planning his appeals) as recent high-profile convictions who have yet to serve jail time.

13. (SBU) Comment: A string of recent convictions of Thailand's rich, powerful, and famous (reftel) have added some excitement to media headlines, but legal groups are still waiting for a conviction to lead to actual time spent in prison instead of additional appeals combined with flight abroad. In Rangsan's case, justice delayed may yet still end up as justice denied. The wait of 16 years may have afforded him a more lenient sentence and guaranteed access to bail, since Prama died of natural causes in early 2008 prior to the conclusion of the case. End Comment.

ENTWISTLE